

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 3-16 are pending in the above-identified application with claims 1 and 3-13 being rejected and claims 14-16 being objected to previously.

In the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner maintains the rejection under 35 USC § 103(a) of claims 1, 3-9 and 11-13 under 35 USC § 103(a) over Yamashita (US 5,468,516). The Examiner further maintains the prior rejection of claims 1 and 3-13 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamashita et al. (US 5,736,501). Reconsideration and withdrawal of each of these maintained rejections are requested based upon the following considerations.

In Applicants' prior response of October 29, 2003, starting at page 12, line 7 and continuing through page 17, line 12, Applicants remark upon the present invention and its advantages, as well as patentable distinctions over each of the cited Yamashita et al. '516 and '501 references. The Examiner is respectfully requested to review the remarks set forth in the earlier response of October 29, 2003 at pages 12-17 as noted above. Said remarks are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

Based upon a full and proper consideration of the earlier filed remarks, it is submitted that the Examiner will understand that each of the pending claims being rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) are indeed non-obvious over each of the cited Yamashita et al. '516 and '501 references.

Apart from the above considerations, the Examiner has objected to claims 14-16 indicating that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. However, based upon Applicants' contention that all pending claims are allowable, it is believed that claims 14-16 do not have to be written in independent form in order to be allowed. In this respect, it is submitted that each of claims 14-16 already depend from base claims that are allowable at present.

CONCLUSION

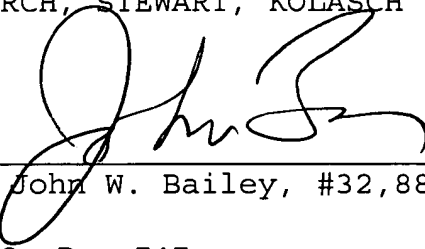
Based upon the comments presented herein, as well as those submitted earlier on October 29, 2003, the Examiner is respectfully requested to issue a Notice of Allowance clearly indicating that claims 1 and 3-16 are allowed and patentable under the provisions of Title 35 of the United States Code.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact John W. Bailey (Reg. No. 32,881) at the telephone number below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By  \_\_\_\_\_

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1422-0428P